

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Fri., Feb. 26, 2016

CONTACT: Dean Flener
OFFICE: 615-741-0430

EMERGENCY MANAGERS, METEOROLOGISTS, PRIVATE SECTOR ENTITIES AND STATE AGENCIES HIGHLIGHT PREPAREDNESS TO ENCOURAGE TENNESSEANS TO BE SEVERE WEATHER AWARE

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam has declared Feb. 28, to Mar. 5, 2016, as Severe Weather Awareness Week to encourage all Tennesseans to make planning and preparing for severe weather a priority.

Throughout the week, a number of organizations at the local, state and federal levels will conduct educational activities across the state with a goal of helping people prevent injuries and fatalities due to the hazards severe weather can present: tornadoes, damaging winds, flash floods, lightning and hail.

"It is imperative that individuals, families, businesses, and communities be ready now before severe weather is upon them," said Deputy Commissioner David Purkey of the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA). "We are pleased to have so many State departments, county emergency officials and private sector partners working with TEMA to push out information, resources and tools to make it easy to get prepared."

For its part, TEMA is announcing a new partnership with the Outdoor Advertising Association of Tennessee (OAAT) to provide important information on donated digital billboard space during disasters and emergencies.

Through the OAAT partnership, TEMA will be able to target messages to the 183 digital billboards OAAT members currently have in place across the state. The messages can be delivered to a digital billboard in a specific geographic area or to multiple digital billboards for a widespread event.

"Protecting the public in emergencies is a shared concern of everyone and OAAT members want to play a major role in helping the public receive vital information before or after any type of disaster," said Bill Rush, OAAT executive director.

TEMA may use the digital billboards to post information about evacuation routes, shelter locations, road closures, helpful phone numbers, recovery activities or other relevant information important to the public in a disaster-impacted area.

(more)

Severe Weather Week/Page 2

"Tennessee faces a multitude of man-made, natural and technological threats," Purkey said. "When a disaster is imminent or immediately after it occurs, it is imperative to relay timely, accurate and helpful information to the general public so they know how to help and protect themselves."



National Weather Service (NWS) Hosts Awareness and Education Events

The NWS is planning a series of education and training events, using each day of Severe Weather Awareness Week to focus on a different severe weather threat. A highlight of the week will be the statewide tornado drill at 9:30 a.m., CST, on Wed., Mar. 2.

"Knowing what to do and having a plan during any kind of severe weather is essential for Tennesseans," said Krissy Hurley, warning coordination meteorologist with NWS Nashville. "It's not if the next severe weather event will occur; it's merely a question of when."

The NWS event schedule is as follows, and available at www.srh.noaa.gov/ohx/?n=swaw2016:

- **Sat., Feb. 27** – *Severe Weather Awareness Day* at Trevecca Nazarene University, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., CST, in Nashville
- **Sun., Feb. 28** – *Important Role of SKYWARN Spotters*
- **Mon., Feb. 29** – *Severe Thunderstorms and the Devastating Effects of Severe Storms*
- **Tue., Mar. 1** - *Lightning, the Underrated Killer*
 - Tennessee's NWS offices will hold a Twitter question and answer session at 6 p.m., CST.
- **Wed., Mar. 2** - *Tornado Safety and Preparedness*
 - **Statewide Tornado Drill at 9:30 a.m., CST**, including a test of the NOAA Weather Radio System
 - Tennessee's NWS Offices host a [Severe Weather Preparedness Google Hangout](#) session at 6:30 p.m., CST.
 - Midland NOAA Weather Radio programming event, from 3:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., CST, at Electronic Express, 5308 Nolensville Road in Nashville
- **Thurs., Mar. 3** - *Hazards of Flooding and Flash Floods*
 - NWS will issue **Spring Flood Outlook** at 10 a.m., CST.
- **Fri., Mar. 4** - *NOAA Weather Radio and The Emergency Alert System*
 - Back-up day for statewide tornado drill and social media events if there is severe weather on Wed., Mar. 2.

"Emergency Managers all across the state are always planning for inclement weather, because we know it can happen at a moment's notice," said John Mathews, Sevier County Emergency Management director and president of the Emergency Management Association of Tennessee (EMAT).

(more)

Severe Weather Week/Page 3

"Every year, we look forward to Severe Weather Awareness Week as it allows us to educate the public on the importance of being prepared," Mathews said. "Each year, several people are killed or seriously injured by severe storms, and these storms affect everyone no matter their socioeconomic status. So, EMAT encourages everyone to learn how to prepare themselves and their homes for bad weather and practice the plan frequently."

Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance Says Update Home Insurance Policies

The Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance urges consumers to use Severe Weather Awareness Week as a valuable opportunity to make sure their home insurance policies are updated and that they have a current inventory of all their home's belongings in the event of an emergency.

"Homeowners should always keep pictures and/or receipts for all contents on their property in case they experience an emergency," Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance Julie Mix McPeak said. "It's a good habit to update the inventory at least once a year and store it in a safe place outside the home such as a safe deposit box. "

Digital tools such as the National Association of Insurance Commissioner's (NAIC) MyHome Scr.APP.book smartphone application allows homeowners to capture images and descriptions of belongings to help determine how much insurance you need and for filing a claim. The app makes it easier for consumers to document their valuables, update their inventories and store the information for easy access.

Tennessee Department of Health

The Department of Health reminds Tennesseans that everyone has a responsibility to be prepared for severe weather. Individuals, families and businesses are urged to make plans for responding to disasters as the best way to protect their health, safety and prosperity.

"Don't wait until a flood or storm strikes to think about what to do," said TDH Commissioner John Dreyzehner, MD, MPH. "All of us need to have a personal protection plan for ourselves and our families. That plan should include where to shelter if a tornado is heading your way, how you'll contact loved ones if phones are out or you can't return home and having resources to be self-sufficient for at least three days."

TDH also offers opportunities for Tennesseans to show their volunteer spirit by participating as members of the state's Medical Reserve Corps teams. MRC groups work in the community to support efforts to restore health and safety during and after emergencies. MRC volunteers receive orientation and training, and anyone can serve. Learn more at www.tnmrc.org/.

(more)

Severe Weather Week/Page 4

Tennessee Department of Safety & Homeland Security's Road Safety Reminders

The Department of Safety and Homeland Security urges people to not travel when severe weather is a possibility. It is not necessary to take a risk that could put you or your loved ones in a dangerous weather related situation.

- Do not attempt to cross standing water that has obstructed a roadway. The water level may be deeper than perceived. Your vehicle will not overcome the power of water.
- Do not attempt to cross fallen power lines. These lines can be "hot" and could potentially cause severe injury or death.
- If you are caught in a vehicle during a severe weather event such as a Tornado, leave the vehicle and seek a low lying area or indoor shelter.
- Do not seek shelter under bridges or overpasses.
- Always be prepared! Stock your vehicle with blankets, snacks, water, flashlight, batteries, car phone charger and booster cables.
- Dial *THP (847) from your mobile phone to connect to a THP dispatch center if you need assistance.
- Make sure you have a full tank of gas.
- If a weather-related event is forecast, monitor the situation by watching your local media.

- Please visit the Department of Safety and Homeland Security social media outlets to receive the latest roadway conditions: Facebook, [Tennessee Highway Patrol](#) and Twitter, [@TNHighwayPatrol](#)

Be Ready, Make a Plan, Have a Kit

The most important preparedness tip for severe weather is to stay informed to its potential. Listen to NOAA Weather Radio, watch TV or listen to the radio for weather updates and warnings.

Other severe weather awareness tips and resources include:

- Never venture into high water, either on foot or in a vehicle.
- If you're outside and hear thunder, go indoors immediately.
- Know the location of and route to your office or building's tornado shelter.
- Never try to outrun a tornado.
- Have an emergency plan ready at places where your family spends time: work, school, daycare, commuting and outdoor events.
- Emergency plans should include where to meet, and who family members should check in with, if you are separated from family members during a severe weather emergency.
- The website, www.ready.gov, has fill-in-the-blank plans available so individuals and families can assemble the information needed in a personal emergency plan.

(more)

Severe Weather Week/Page 5

At a minimum, emergency preparedness kits should include one gallon of water per day, per person and per pet, for up to three days. The kit should also have enough non-perishable food for each family member, and pets, for up to three days.

Other items that every kit should include are: a flashlight, battery-powered radio, extra batteries, first aid kit, personal hygiene items, cell phone charger or solar charger and copies of important family documents.

It is also very important that emergency kits contain extra supplies of medications, especially for those with chronic health conditions.

###

ABOUT TEMA

TEMA's mission is to coordinate preparedness, response and recovery from man-made, natural and technological hazards in a professional and efficient manner in concert with our stakeholders.